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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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Precautions urged during severe cold weather

Plan for exposure at special outdoor events

With severe cold weather predicted to grip the northeast for several days, the public is urged to take all precautions when venturing outdoors. Many outdoor activities are scheduled for the weekend and early next week while the temperatures are not expected to go above freezing and may remain in the teens and low 20s.

Those who plan to observe the Whistle Stop train tour of President-Elect Barack Obama and Vice President-Elect Joe Biden or Martin Luther King Day events should heed weather predictions and plan accordingly. Many locations of outdoor events will not have sheltered and heated spaces available and may require long waits from time of entry.

Extra care should be taken with infants and small children who may not be able to communicate clearly when toes, fingers and ears are becoming dangerously cold. Those of all ages should have adequate coverage for head and ears, heavy gloves or mittens and socks and shoes appropriate for walking some distance and standing out in the cold.

Because of road closures for Wilmington train station ceremonies Saturday and for Delaware gubernatorial inauguration ceremonies Wednesday, the public attending those events will have to plan for access, parking and the distance to walk to reach the event. This could all result in more exposure to the elements in subfreezing weather.

Consider the following cold weather safety tips if you plan to participate in outdoor activities during the next few days:

- Dress in several layers of loose-fitting clothing rather than tight sweaters or pants. A hooded water repellent or windbreaker fabric outer layer can help hold body heat in.
- Wear warm socks, preferably those with a thermal sock liner and closed shoes.
- Scarves, hats and earmuffs help prevent loss of body heat and protect tender ears.
- Heavy mittens instead of gloves can keep hands warmer than most gloves, or layer silk glove liners under heavy gloves.
- Walk around or move in place to increase circulation and generate additional body heat.

- Drink warm beverages if available, but avoid alcohol because it contributes to loss to body heat.

Be aware of warning signs of frostbite and hypothermia. Frostbite can occur when skin is exposed to extreme cold, sometimes for only a relatively short time. Warning signs include a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, ear lobes or the tip of the nose.

Hypothermia can occur when the body temperature drops to less than 95 degrees F and it is potentially fatal. Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion.

Anyone experiencing any of the warning signs of frost bite or hypothermia, or observing the signs in someone else should seek medical attention immediately.

The public is advised to monitor websites of DelDOT, local law enforcement and the Presidential Inauguration Committee, www.pic2009.org, for updates and information on transportation and access routes.

There will be security checks at entry points to some event locations. Some prohibited items may include thermoses and other glass containers and coolers. Those planning to be outside for a ceremony may not be able to count on taking in a container of hot coffee or cocoa.

Those choosing to remain close to home during the upcoming special events are reminded to dress their children warmly and limit outdoor play during severely cold weather. Also, pets should be adequately sheltered and provided with fresh, unfrozen water at all times.

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